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AB 722—Incandescent Phase Out—Frequently Asked Questions

AB 722 bans "general service" incandescent light bulbs. What is a general service incandescent light bulb?

The California Energy Commission has created a specific definition for general service incandescents. These are bulbs that screw into light sockets, and use between 25 and 150 watts. The following incandescent lamps are not general service incandescent lamps: appliance, black light, bug, colored, enhanced spectrum, infrared, left-hand thread, marine, marine signal service, mine service, plant light, reflector, rough service, shatter resistant, sign service, silver bowl, showcase, three-way, traffic signal, and vibration service or vibration resistant.

Do compact fluorescent lights (CFL) work on dimmer switches?

Yes. There are commercially available compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs that are specifically designed to work with dimmer switches. For example, GE sells the Longlife Plus Soft White Energy Saving Bulb:
http://genet.gelighting.com/LightProducts/Dispatcher?REQUEST=CONSUMERSPECPAGE&PRODUCTCODE=49687.
For more information of GE CFL lighting, you can visit:
http://www.gelighting.com/na/home_lighting/products/energy_smart.htm
Phillips also makes a dimmable specifically for recessed lighting.
http://www.nam.lighting.philips.com/us/consumer/marathon/display.php?mode=3.
These bulbs last for much longer than a general service incandescent, and use far less energy.

Incandescent lights turn on very quickly and therefore are very effective with motion sensors. How will this ban affect my motion sensors?

In the past fluorescent bulbs did pose a problem when used in conjunction with motion sensor, because they took some time to reach full intensity. However, for several years, compact fluorescent bulbs have existed that work flawlessly with motion sensors. The recent generation of CFL's come on nearly instantly, usually in less than half a second.

Will AB 722 affect flashlights and car lighting?

No. This bill focuses exclusively on general service incandescent bulbs. Essentially, these are standard household bulbs. We are not targeting specialty bulbs.

How will this phase out effect businesses that use very large incandescent lighting in their business, for example theatres and the motion picture industry?

It will not affect them. These industries use lights that are well above 150 watts, and thus are not the general purpose light bulbs that are affected by this legislation.

With incandescent lights I can just throw them away in the trash. I understand that CFL have mercury in them. How will that affect the environment?

CFLs do contain trace amounts of mercury, usually between .03 and .1 mg of mercury per bulb. However, California has begun to address this issue. In February 2006, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, in conjunction with the California Integrated Waste Management Board, began to implement the second phase of the aggressive collection of "universal waste," requiring that common household items that are deemed hazardous to people and the environment must be separated from regular trash and collected for safe disposal. While this is a good start to improving the health of our environment, more needs to be done. That is why Assemblymember Levine is committed to working to ensure that a user-friendly recycling program is established to prevent mercury from CFLs from being released into the environment.

Florescent lighting causes me to have headaches. How will you address this issue?

There are several different issues that must be discussed when addressing health concerns related to fluorescent lighting. Many of the problems associated with fluorescent lights are not the result of CFLs, but rather the overhead tube fluorescents common in offices. Overhead tube fluorescents are not an alternative to the incandescent lights being phased out in this bill.

It is also important to note that this bill does not prescribe fluorescent lighting as the only alternative to incandescent lighting. It simply eliminates obsolete incandescent technology. If CFL cause problems, there are alternatives such as LED lights, and other lighting technologies that will be available in the very near future.

Finally, some people who are uncomfortable in rooms that are not illuminated by incandescent light require specific types of incandescent lighting. For example, full spectrum incandescents are sometimes used to prevent headaches. These bulbs would not be affected by our bill. Only general service incandescents will be phased out by this proposal.

I live on a very tight budget. I can only afford incandescent bulbs.

This bill will save money for every Californian from the moment they change from incandescents to a more efficient technology. While the initial cost of an incandescent light bulb is $0.50 compared to $3.00 for a CFL, over the life of the bulb a customer will save up to $62.00. For example, a new 13-watt compact fluorescent light bulb produces as much light - as many lumens - as a traditional 60-watt incandescent bulb. This means as much light, using only one-quarter of the electrical energy. Plus, fluorescents last 10 to 15 times longer, saving money on both energy bills and money for replacement bulbs. In fact, the average florescent light bulb

produces 400% more light per dollar than an incandescent bulb. Additionally, many power companies have begun providing CFL bulbs to their customers free of charge. To date, Southern California Edison has distributed over 1 million CFLs.

I find that CFLs produce inferior light to incandescents. If I am willing to pay increased energy costs, why shouldn't I be able to buy the light bulbs that I prefer?

A wide variety of high efficiency bulbs produce light that is indistinguishable from incandescents. CFLs marked "soft white" provide the same luminosity, in the same hue, as incandescents. However, there is a whole array of new light options available with high efficiency technologies that are not possible with incandescents. For example, LED lights function very well for directional lighting; this is ideal for lighting such as down-lighting used in kitchens. Also, CFLs can be produced to create a much brighter light than is possible with incandescents. All of these options are less expensive in the long run, and help the environment.